

CIA admits opening mail of Rep. Abzug

From Tribune Wire Services

WASHINGTON—The Central Intelligence Agency kept a file on Rep. Bella Abzug [D., N. Y.] that included information obtained by opening her private mail, CIA Director William Colby acknowledged Wednesday.

"A considerable amount of matter in your file should not be in there," Colby conceded to the congresswoman as he provided her with a copy of the file, which the agency has kept on her activities since 1963.

In that year, the congresswoman said, she represented various entertainers as a private attorney before the now-defunct House Un-American Activities Committee.

"BUT THERE ARE certain aspects which are legitimate in this file," Colby said. He testified before a House subcommittee about a long list of files that the agency keeps on U. S. citizens.

Rep. Abzug said the file contains information on her antiwar activities obtained both from the public record and from surveillance of her mail dating back to 1963, when she was practicing law. She charged that the CIA "seriously violated the privacy of my clients" by opening her mail.

Colby did not dispute her charges. He said the file dealt with her antiwar activities because "we picked up a statement you made about an organization we were interested in."

"I SEE THERE are certain things in your file that should

not be there," Colby said. "But some of them are legitimate."

Rep. Abzug fired back, "Are you suggesting there is anything in my file reflecting improper activity?"

Colby replied "No."

But, he added, mail surveillance of Rep. Abzug "has been terminated and will not be resumed." He also said that the CIA's investigation of antiwar groups concluded "There was no foreign manipulation or influence."

But Colby particularly defended including in the file the congresswoman's contacts in 1972 with members of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Viet Nam, the Viet Cong.

"IT IS PERFECTLY proper for the CIA to follow the acts

of that Vietnamese organization," Colby said. "We were not following you," he told the congresswoman.

The file also detailed Rep. Abzug's appearances at antiwar rallies in the United States.

Colby said he turned over Rep. Abzug's file to her in response to a request she made following news reports of domestic spying by the CIA.

He assured her that the CIA no longer keeps a file on her and that there is no record of her activities on a recent fact-finding trip she made to Viet Nam.

Colby said opening her mail was part of a previously acknowledged agency program of mail surveillance between the U. S. and Communist countries that was terminated in 1973.

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